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Outcomes of the in-depth reviews carried out by the Conference of European Statisticians Bureau

Results of the consultation on the outcomes of in-depth reviews

Note by the Secretariat

Summary

This note summarizes the comments by members of the Conference of European Statisticians on outcomes of in-depth reviews carried out by the Bureau of the Conference. The Secretariat conducted the electronic consultation in April 2015.

A total of 32 replies were received in response to the request for comments: from 30 countries and 2 international organizations.

In view of the support expressed through the electronic consultation, the Conference will be invited to endorse the outcomes of the in-depth reviews on population projections, process oriented approach to statistical production, and measuring extreme events and disasters under agenda item 6(a).

The Conference will also be invited to discuss further work needed to improve measurement of labour mobility and globalisation under agenda item 6(b). The Bureau will decide on the possible way forward in this area in October 2015 based on the feedback received from the consultation and the discussion at the CES plenary session.

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I. Introduction

1. This note summarizes the comments by members of the Conference of European Statisticians (CES) on the outcomes of in-depth reviews carried out by the CES Bureau in October 2014 and February 2015. The electronic consultation was conducted by the Secretariat in April 2015.

2. The purpose of the reviews is to improve coordination of statistical activities in the region of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), identify gaps or duplication of work, and address emerging issues. These reviews focus on strategic issues and highlight concerns of statistical offices of both a conceptual and coordinating nature.

3. A total of 32 replies were received in response to the request for comments from: Albania, Armenia, Australia, Belarus, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Mexico, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Tajikistan, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, Eurostat and United Nations Statistics Division in New York.

II. Comments on the outcome of the in-depth review on labour mobility and globalisation

A. General comments on the way forward

4. All responding countries and organizations support the conclusions of the in-depth review paper, prepared by Austria, and make suggestions for further work priorities.

5. Many countries cited a specific need to first develop a conceptual framework to improve the measurement of labour mobility across statistical domains, countries, and organizations (Croatia, Colombia, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Mexico, Netherlands and Portugal).

6. Several countries felt that harmonisation of general concepts and definitions was needed to improve the measurement of labour mobility (Belarus, Germany, Lithuania and Turkey). In particular, harmonization is needed between migration statistics, tourism statistics and national accounts, despite inherent difficulties of working across statistical domains (Albania, Croatia, Germany, Lithuania, Norway and Spain). Countries noted the need for technical assistance and practical guidance to improve the measurement of labour mobility.

7. Existing frameworks and resources should be used to as great an extent as possible, including relying on the Manual on Statistics of International Trade in Services and existing working groups on related issues like globalisation (Australia). Many countries stressed the importance of working in close coordination with ILO on this topic, in particular with the ILO Working Group on Labour Migration Statistics, to ensure coordination of work (Colombia, Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Mexico, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Tajikistan and Turkey). Good collaboration between statisticians and national authorities and with the academia should also be sought (Hungary and Tajikistan).

8. A number of countries described existing data sources and need for additional data to measure labour mobility. Utilization and integration of household surveys, administrative sources, and other alternative and innovative data sources were seen as necessary to improve knowledge on the topic (Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, Mexico, Netherlands, Romania, Spain and Turkey).

B. Priority areas for the work of the Task Force

9. Countries expressed support for the new Task Force on Labour Mobility, and supported the following tasks as the priority areas:

(a) Many underlined as a priority task the development of a framework with common definitions and review of existing methodologies (Albania, Colombia, Croatia, Hungary, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Turkey).

(b) Many countries also supported a collection of good practices (Albania, Belarus, Colombia, Hungary, Lithuania, Netherlands, Tajikistan and Turkey). This should also be made available in Russian.

(c) Data exchange was deemed important for progressing on this topic (Albania, Colombia, Hungary, Netherlands, Spain and Turkey), though some countries expressed reservations on the detail of micro-data that could be exchanged (Sweden). How "mirror statistics" could be utilized by countries, and possible challenges involved, were also discussed by a few countries (Belarus and Mexico).

(d) An assessment of data availability and quality, and guidelines of how to best use and improve these data sources, was also suggested by some countries (Lithuania and Romania).

10. A number of additional issues were identified where the Task Force work could be beneficial, including solving difficulties of measuring short-term migrants (Belarus and Hungary) and tourists (Germany and Hungary), as well as "irregular" migrants, circular migrants and cross-border workers (Mexico).

11. Additional suggestions include restricting the scope of the work to employment work and not extend to all forms as work as defined in the 19th International Conference of Labour Statisticians' (ICLS) resolution (Germany), to not only cover the movement of persons but also the movement of jobs (United Nations Statistics Division), and to not include "globalisation" in the mandate for the proposed Task Force on Labour Mobility (Netherlands).

III. Comments on the outcome of the in-depth review on population projections

A. General comments

12. Countries expressed support to the outcome of the in-depth review by the Bureau and to the paper prepared by Canada and the United Kingdom. In addition, the following remarks were made:

(a) Armenia welcomed the activities proposed on population projections, adding that training courses on population projections have been conducted in the country with the support of the United States Census Bureau and the United Nations Population Fund to build the capacity of the relevant staff;

(b) Chile considered appropriate and of great importance the objectives for the Task Force on Population Projections proposed in the Terms of Reference. Chile noted also that according to the Terms of Reference, the work of the Task Force should focus on projections at the national and broad regional level, while projections for small areas (that is an area of concern in Chile) would not be considered;

(c) Germany agreed with the work proposed, and suggested the following amendments to the in-depth review paper: in annex A of the paper it should be added in the column "methodology notes" for Germany: Cohort component. Assumptions based on past trends, use expert advice on trends and analysis. In paragraph 73 Germany suggests using the term "to consider" (instead of "stay abreast") "micro simulations";

(d) Israel and the United States provided material and information on their population projections, to be considered for inclusion in the in-depth review paper;

(e) Italy observed that Istat has participated actively in all past Eurostat-UNECE meetings on projections, organizing two of them, namely in Perugia (1999) and in Rome (2013). Italy is also one of the members of the new Task Force;

(f) Norway commented on point 5a) in the review paper, noting that the priority should be making accurate projections (possibly developing and improving methods), and not ensuring comparability over time and between countries. It follows that it can be expected that different countries use different methods, also considering differences in needs and available resources. Similarly, it is not necessary to have a common time horizon. What is important is to document the methodology used and how the assumptions are developed. Norway noted that paragraph 39 in Annex A of the review paper (referring to Norway) should be moved up after paragraph 24 (this was also noted by the United States).

B. Views on the way forward

13. All responding countries and organizations support the CES Bureau decision to set up a Task Force on Population Projections to: (i) prepare a collection of good practices on communicating population projections to users; and (ii) provide guidance on the establishment of a UNECE database of metadata about national and international population projections.

14. In addition, some countries and organizations made the following comments or suggestions concerning the work proposed for the new Task Force on Population Projections, and more in general future work in the field of projections:

(a) Albania expressed its willingness to be part of the new Task Force;

(b) New Zealand expressed support for the work proposed, and suggested that projections (other than population projections) produced by each national statistical office and international organisation (e.g. labour force, family, household) should at least be included in the database (i.e. without necessarily going into detail). The reason indicated by New Zealand is that such projections are often inter-connected and complementary to population projections, and therefore collecting some limited information would form a useful basis for more in-depth inquiries by individual national statistical offices and/or UNECE at later dates;

(c) Norway expressed some reluctance to the proposal of a database of metadata on population projections, considering the burden on countries for reporting and updating, and suggested that a summary with links to all countries' own publications could be sufficient, encouraging countries to publish as much as possible metadata in English. Norway also provided some comments on communicating uncertainty and the use of the words "projections" and "forecasts", which will be shared with the Task Force. Finally, Norway considered as very useful the Eurostat/UNECE Work Sessions on Demographic Projections, and suggested holding them more frequently;

(d) The United States, with regard to the establishment of a new database of metadata about population projections, recommended including metadata for both the U.S.

national projections and the set of international projections produced for the US Census Bureau International Data Base (IDB);

(e) Eurostat confirmed its long-term commitment in the co-organization of Work Sessions on Demographic Projections (item II.3.E in the review paper), that are planned to be continued in the future.

IV. Comments on the outcome of the in-depth review on the process-oriented approach to statistical production

A. General comments

15. Countries widely recognise the need to move towards a process-oriented approach to statistical production, and many countries have taken measures in that direction. For example, Mexico has developed a national application of the model statistical system (The National System of Statistical and Geographical Information, SNIEG) as well as its own application of the process model of statistical production.

16. Several countries note (Hungary, Italy, Lithuania and Sweden) that the review paper, prepared by Turkey, provides a valuable collection of information on countries' activities related to the process-oriented approach to statistical production and makes good recommendations on possible follow-up actions.

17. Italy cautions about the coexistence of two reporting lines for the same structure as this might cause management problems during the transition from one organizational structure to the other. The transition to a new production approach requires a change in the vision of the whole organization.

18. The process-oriented approach applies also to international organizations. For example, an inventory of all existing regulations should be carried out to see whether they support process-oriented work or the stovepipe orientation.

B. Views on the way forward

19. All responding countries and organizations support the outcome of the in-depth review, i.e. the CES Bureau decision to organise a High-Level Seminar on Process-Oriented Approach to Statistical Production, to be organised jointly by Turkey and the High-Level Group for the Modernisation of Statistical Production and Services. The CES Bureau will consider further taking into account the following country priorities:

(a) Several countries underlined that the seminar should share experience from organizational changes (Australia, Belarus, Chile, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania and Netherlands), and provide latest information on the new standards and initiatives relating to the process-oriented approach (Belarus). The seminar should also discuss the common problems of introducing the process-oriented approach, such as resistance to change and difficulty of changing functions;

(b) Specific training activities are essential to support the required cultural change in national statistical offices and their human resources management, so that they start moving towards the process-oriented approach and overcome the stovepipe organization;

(c) Regarding the "to do" list, Chile expressed strong support for developing such a list and a knowledge base as their office is undergoing a strategic analysis to

improve the functional structure of the organization. Hungary on the other hand, indicated that the generic statistical production models, such as the Generic Statistical Business Process Model (GSBPM), the Generic Statistical Information Model (GSIM) or the Common Statistical Production Architecture (CSPA), are sufficient for describing the framework of a process-oriented organisation, and as the development of a simple but actionable "to do" list may be challenging (Hungary and Sweden), such a list is not needed as the first priority.

V. Comments on the outcome of the in-depth review on measuring extreme events and disasters

A. General comments

20. Countries noted that official statistics and statisticians can play an important role in measuring extreme events and disasters. Several countries appreciated the comprehensive and informative review paper.

B. Views on the way forward

21. All responding countries and organizations support the outcome of the in-depth review based on a paper by Mexico, and the CES Bureau decision to set up a Task Force on Measuring Extreme Events and Disasters. The aim of the Task Force will be to clarify the role of official statistics in providing data related to extreme events and disasters, and identify practical steps how national statistical offices can support disaster management with the relevant agencies. In addition, the following points were made:

(a) This work is closely linked to the work of the Steering Group on Climate Change-Related Statistics and also to the work of the Task Force on Set of Key Climate Change Indicators (Eurostat, Italy). An upcoming Expert Meeting for Producers and Users of Climate Change-Related Statistics (2-3 September 2015, Geneva) will include a session dedicated to Extreme Events and Disasters;

(b) It is important to link geographical information with statistics to measure extreme events and disasters, and collaborate with the United Nations Global Geospatial Information Management (UN-GGIM);

(c) The Framework for the Development of Environment Statistics includes a specific section on Extreme Events and Disasters which provides a starting point for the work (Italy);

(d) Collaboration with the European Environment Agency and the Joint Research Centre of the European Commission would improve synergies between statistical institutes and technical risk management (France and Sweden). The Joint Research Centre of the European Commission is carrying out a project called Disaster Loss Data in the European Union (EU) which aims to map out existing databases within the EU today and look into the possibility of developing an EU database with common standards that would be aligned with the United Nations models, tools and demands on loss databases and similar activities;

(e) The work links to issues discussed at the 3rd World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction which was held in March 2015. The last sentence of point 3h reads: "Participation of statisticians … will be important" in that event. As this event was held, perhaps something could be said about the actual contribution made by statisticians or requests towards them from the World Conference;

(f) Chile informed of their interest to become an observer and later a member of the Task Force;

(g) United Kingdom noted that it might be worth considering what is required at the various stages of work based on identifying a few case studies – for example when planning risk reduction, during the disaster itself and afterwards. On point 6 c of the paper, it might be helpful to expand more on the link between the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting and measuring extreme events and disasters.

VI. Proposal

22. Given the support by countries, the Conference is invited to endorse the outcomes of the in-depth reviews on population projections, process oriented approach to statistical production, and measuring extreme events and disasters under agenda item 6(a).

23. The CES Bureau selected the topic of labour mobility and globalisation for discussion at the CES plenary session in June 2015 in Geneva. The Conference will be invited to discuss further work needed to improve measurement of labour mobility and globalisation under agenda item 6(b). The Bureau will decide on the way forward in this area in October 2015 based on the feedback received from the consultation and the discussion at the CES plenary session.

24. The Secretariat will forward the detailed comments by countries and organizations to the authors of in-depth review papers and the relevant Task Forces to be taken into account in further work.